Yoel Hoffmann's *Curriculum Vitae* and *Japanese Death Poems* as Keys to Reading his Work

Nili Scharf Gold

Curriculum Vitae, the miniscule book by Yoel Hoffmann, has a gray cover that makes it look a little bit like an old-fashioned office file that holds formal documents. Its title is not in Hebrew, but is rather an international concept whose origin is Latin: even the letters printed on its cover are in the efficient Latin alphabet, not the Hebrew of Hoffmann's writing. An unsuspecting reader might actually be deceived by the cover of the volume and expect its contents to match the bureaucratic appearance. Indeed, even the title points to this tension. The literal meaning of "curriculum vitae" is "the course of life", while in everyday use it is a list organized by date of basic facts about someone's life: his professional and academic achievements, diplomas and prizes, and works produced. Hoffmann's *Curriculum Vitae* has some of this information, but none of it in order – almost an anti-curriculum vitae. From its pages, however, the strange, awkward heroes of Hoffmann's previous books also peek out, so one can read *Curriculum Vitae* as a summary of Hoffmann's literary corpus or even as a quasi guide to his life. Moreover, *Curriculum Vitae* conducts an active, intra-textual relationship with the author's other writings, both fictional and scholarly, suggesting that his previous works contain authentic elements from the life of the man who wrote them.

Yet, the little gray volume is not an autobiography. In an autobiography, there is a complete overlap between the main character and the author; a standard "curriculum vitae" relies on similar materials, but in a concise, impersonal and professional form. So how should one read Hoffmann's self-declared CV? Throughout his literary oeuvre, Hoffmann preserves the separation between character and author. He does so even in later works in which he includes a character by the name of "Yoel Hoffmann." Yet in the 2007 *Curriculum Vitae*, the distance between author and character narrows. Hoffmann's progress toward this shift may be seen if one pays careful attention to the various cover pages of his Hebrew books. A number of his earlier ones contain a ubiquitous disclaimer: "All characters and events are imaginary and any connection between them and reality is completely random".[1] A longer, more deliberate, disclaimer appears in later books. This disclaimer fully denies any connection between the book's plot and real events, as well as between

its characters and real people, dead or alive.[2] But *Curriculum Vitae* is different. On its cover page, it says: "The plot of the book, its characters, and their names, are **mostly** imaginary". It continues, "**sometimes** the connection between the plot of the book and real events, like the connection between its characters and real people, is random".[3] (emphasis mine) In other words, in the fine print often ignored by readers, Hoffmann admits that much of *Curriculum Vitae* is about his real life. Yet the way Hoffmann shares autobiographical information does not surrender to genre, certainly not to the genres of autobiography or curriculum vitae. Instead, it cancels them. In the same way that Hoffmann wrote novels that are not novels, and prose that is not prose, so too this pseudo-CV defies definition and mocks its genre's rules.[4]

In this article I attempt to point to some features that single out this work and to some that it shares with others. I devote attention to Hoffmann's poetics and thought, his fascination with sounds, especially the remembrance of sounds, as well as to biographical themes such as orphanhood and marriage. Part of the method by which Hoffmann subverts the genre of curriculum vitae is what I dub 'scrambling,' a Riffaterrian term that I have borrowed and modified. 'Scrambling' is a type of writing that presents itself to the reader as a well-formed text despite its lack of order or logical sequentiality. This kind of text contains narrative or poetic units, but their order is undone, and the links between them are omitted or made implicit. Riffaterre speaks of artistic 'scrambling' when describing a text that alludes to another text, but does so in such a way that the other text becomes almost unrecognizable because the order of its original units has been jumbled.[5] I suggest that Hoffmann indeed alludes to another 'text' in *Curriculum Vitae*. That other 'text' is his very life. Instead of forging it in an order common for a CV or autobiography, he takes that 'text,' his life story, and scrambles its units. For example, his travails in the Israeli navy appear *before* an anecdote from 6th grade in which he walks hand-in-hand with a girl. Hoffmann also intersperses seemingly random fragments between the autobiographical ones to confuse and separate their chronological order further. Yet Hoffmann's text does not become nonsensical. Each one of the units stands on its own but the connection between them is often unclear and it is up to the reader to rearrange them into a continuum.

A telling case of scrambling involves the details of the narrator's birth. Segment 1 in the book skips the day of his birth entirely and jumps to age three and a half. Additionally, his age appears in the second sentence, not the first. What follows is sporadic information about events that occurred after Hoffmann was seven or eight years old. It is not until segment 15, some thirty pages into the book, that the birth itself is mentioned. As for his birthplace, Brashov, it is buried in segment 57 and its importance is minimized by the context in which it appears: a marginal character references it

when he is trying to force his kinship on the narrator.

After he has told events that took place in later years, *Curriculum Vitae'*s narrator, without a visible impetus, momentarily seeks order. He states that if one were to bring order "into the world" one could start either from the heavens or alternately, from the bottom, and "if one started from the bottom one would have to start from the sex's opening, which is to say, from my mother, Margaritta."[6] In other words, while the book opens with the narrator as a three-and-a-half-year-old child, it returns midway to the actual moment when his life begins – his birth. This is also the only time the mother's name, Margaritta, appears in the book. But within that first moment of life lies the end. Hoffmann continues, saying that people ought to pronounce the "n" in "born" by forming their lips to recall death. Here, the author does not refer only to the universal truth that all who are born must die, but also to his own life. The shadow of his mother's early death and her absence determine the story of her son's life almost as much as her fleeting presence. In fact, the date of the mother's death is the first sentence in Hoffmann's so-called *Curriculum Vitae*: "My mother died on January 27th, 1941. I was three and a half years old." (#1)

This opening both echoes and diverges from one of the most famous openings in Hebrew literature, part of which is also the title of that masterpiece. I am speaking, of course, of Israel's Nobel laureate S.Y. Agnon, and his monumental novella *In the Prime of Her Life*, a fictional diary of a woman who lost her mother at a young age. It begins: "My mother died in the prime of her life. She was barely thirty-one years old. Few and harsh were the days of her life".[7] Unlike Agnon, Hoffmann does not disclose his mother's age, or anything about her life, for that matter. But it comes to reason that if her son was orphaned at three and a half, like Agnon's heroine, she too died "in the prime of her life". The great author Amos Oz, a contemporary of Hoffmann, lost his mother when he was twelve. Unlike the late-blooming Hoffmann, Oz burst into the Israeli literary arena at age twenty-five but waited over fifty years, until 2002, before writing *A Tale of Love* for his mother. In it, under piles and piles of words, hides that short and finite sentence, "my mother was thirty-eight when she died".[8] While Oz delayed, Hoffmann presented his tale of love to his mother Margaritta at the dawn of his literary career. His debut story features Katschen, a child consumed by the search for his dead mother. In his infantile consciousness, the lines between the dead and the living are blurred. Indeed, a motherless child continues to knock on the doors of many of Hoffmann's works. First was the neglected Katschen, whose father is in a mental institution while he himself nearly dies on his quest to find his mother Margaritta in the sky. Bernhard, Hoffmann's eponymous widowed hero, mourns his wife Paula but yearns to hear the voice of his mother. Even in the novel *Ephraim,* where the autobiographical plot about the end of a marriage is dominant, the primeval search

for the mother remains. Ephraim walks through Mother's Park (*gan ha-em*) in the city of Haifa, and thinks to himself that "Mother's Park" is so-called because it is where a person looks for his mother.[9] Similarly, the narrator of *Curriculum Vitae* maintains loyalty to his biological mother as he continually reminds the reader of her having been lost by meticulously attaching the words "my stepmother" to any reference to his father's second wife, even though he adored her.[10]

While the intensity of the longing for the mother fluctuates in Hoffmann's writings, her being, or rather the void that she created, is eternal. One of Hoffmann's idiosyncratic ways of giving a texture to that longing is by mimicking the remembered sounds of his infancy. Hoffmann's works are filled with sounds of languages other than Hebrew. This in itself was one of the features of the revolution he led in Israeli literature, which tended to linguistic purism.[11] The desire to listen to the voices or the music of the past began with the title of his very first story. "Katschen" is a German, not Hebrew, term of endearment, meaning "kitten." The speaker of *Curriculum Vitae* invents a term for acoustic memory, the Hebrew neologism *zikhronshema* (זכרונשמע).[12] The translator created a parallel English compound word for it, "memorysound," but it does not capture the essence of remembering something that one has heard as the Hebrew original does.

While *Curriculum Vitae* mentions the mother's name, Margaritta, only once, the story "Katschen" spells out the connection between the 'm' sound of that name and the German word for 'mother,' *mutti*. "Katschen" captures the thirst for the 'm' sound, the sound that connects mother and the child in her bosom. "Mmm" is the only sound that a baby can make while his mouth is closed when nursing. In both "Katschen" and *Bernhard*, the longing for the mother is intertwined with her voice and merges metaphorically with the Proustian awareness of a place where sounds are forever preserved:

> Katschen saw a shell. Once his mother Margaritta told him that shells contained the sound of the sea, and even if the shell was far away from the sea […] the sound of the waves is always in it.[13]

This beautiful image holds Hoffmann's suggestion that just as the sound of the sea continues to reverberate within the shell, so the voice of the dead mother continues to resonate in her son's consciousness. And indeed, the child Katschen follows his mother's distant voice as though under a spell.[14]

In *Bernhard*, Hoffmann's novel about a recent widower, a more mature variation on the same theme appears. Early in the book, Bernhard is at the center of a richly acoustic scene: the music of famous twentieth century composers fills the ocean with "an infinity of sounds"; the voice of God coos "like a dove"; the mating calls of rams echo through the mountains "with a blast and a wail"; and the messiah's horn blows. But finally, at the end, the mother's voice surfaces and the yearnings burst through:

> And sometimes Bernhard too hears the sound of his dead mother Clara's voice. He thinks: 'All the voices in the world are coiled together like threads on one bobbin (that's invisible) and the bobbin turns and turns and the voices are heard'.[15]

While the childish Katschen thinks of nature's recordings – the conch that preserves the sound of the waves – Hoffmann's adult characters allude to more sophisticated imagery to preserve their beloved inner sounds. They refer to a 'spool' or a bobbin, an axis around which a roll of film or a tape is wrapped. By playing that tape, one can again hear one's mother's voice.[16] The man who looks back, writing his *Curriculum Vitae*, uses a slightly different metaphor, but like Bernhard's, it too technologically belongs to the previous century.

> A man looks at his life in the way that one watches a silent movie. The mouth opens but you do not hear a voice. The movements are jumpy, here and there, because the spool of film is interrupted… (#79)

*Curriculum Vitae'*s adult narrator can no longer hear the sound of his mother's voice as it was originally recorded in the movie of his life. But all is not lost. In the same segment where the movie of his life is watched, a German word appears. German was the language that Hoffmann heard early in his life, the language that often reverberates throughout his literary corpus. Here, it presents itself with the word *Dunkelheit*, which means 'darkness,' perhaps the darkness that engulfs the man watching a movie. But *Dunkelheit*, which pops into the narrator's mind as his life movie rolls, carries additional associations for him. As *Curriculum Vitae* nears its end, darkness is also an allusion to the beginning; before God created light, there was chaos and darkness, *hoshekh* (חושך). *Dunkelheit* also begins with the syllable "*Du*", which means "you" in German. "*Du*" is the familiar form of address to the mother whose image is projected on the movie screen but whose voice is not heard. Hoffmann also attaches another meaning to the syllable "Du": in Hebrew, "du" is a prefix that means "double." He demonstrates its usage with the word *du-hayyim* (דו-חיים), literally "double life", the Hebrew word for amphibian, a creature that has two forms of life, in water and on land. The silent film of memories that is rolling in the dark, therefore, is a form of "double life": another way of bringing the dead into the world of the living.

> My mother. Every reader is dear to his mother. She hugs him even from the world of death. His fingernails are hers. […] His eyes are hers. Like the great rivers into which smaller rivers flow, so they themselves flow into the sea. (#79)

This paragraph is yet another attempt on Hoffmann's part to annul death in order to be one

with the mother he lost. Here, his approach is almost scientific: a mother never dies because she continues to exist genetically in her offspring. This perception is another variation on the core quest of the Hoffmann hero: to undo death, the quest that is, perhaps, also behind Hoffmann's attraction to Eastern philosophy, which rejects the binary oppositions of life and death.[17]

There is a direct line between "Katschen" and *Curriculum Vitae* in the desperate search for the mother. But *Curriculum Vitae* also has a strong intra-textual – as well as biographical – relationship with another book by Hoffmann that has a woman at its center. I'm speaking about *Ephraim*, the book dedicated to Hoffmann's first wife. *Curriculum Vitae* is set before he leaves her, and appears to be an attempt to both repay a debt and justify the separation. *Ephraim* delivers an homage to the woman the author abandoned; *Curriculum Vitae* records how she followed him to Japan and raised their children, but it also explores the roots of their discontent.

The first mention of their relationship in *Curriculum Vitae* is "I remember the woman I married and how in Edinburgh we saw a cat devour a fledgling" (#12). The cat killing a bird immediately follows the book's initial reference to the narrator's first wife. While the two parts of the sentence seem unrelated, one cannot ignore a sense of doom, as if the painful end was present at the start. Likewise, the record of the wedding and honeymoon are preceded in the text by a grotesque vision of Nero's fire in Rome: "The balcony he sat on while Rome burned was (I know) a Bauhaus balcony, like those in Tel Aviv [...] his testicles (on which there were lice) were squashed against the seat of the chair" (#14). Was this distorted depiction of the ancient fire another prophecy of doom? Shortly after the couple's wedding and relocation to the provincial northern town of Safed, their daughter is born. His wife, he recalls, "washed cloth diapers and hung them up on the roof to dry like flags of surrender" (#21). For her, it seems, being married and taking care of a baby was a form of defeat. This view of marriage reverberates later in *Curriculum Vitae* through a reference to Hoffmann's academic interest, Chinese symbols: "The symbol for a woman is a picture of a person bent over … The symbol for a married woman is a person bent over […] and a broom" (#42). Being a woman then, is a lower, bent state while being a married woman is almost synonymous with servitude. The symbols' interpretation expressed by the narrator seems to empathize with his wife's lot but we learn that she occasionally flees from Safed to her parents in Tel Aviv and that when she comes back, "her lips are pursed" (#23, #24). Later on, upon the family's return from their long sojourn in Japan, the narrator feels enriched with the treasure trove of Zen riddles he has brought home with him, but his wife does not. The children born into this marriage are welcomed by their father, the narrator, with enormous gratitude. At the same time, he divulges his loneliness, depicting himself and his wife sleeping, "back to back while each one saw, as though in a bubble emerging from the

head of a comic-strip character, different dreams" (#34). The narrator's dreams feature avalanches and earthquakes, symbols of destruction, and indeed in the middle of the book it appears that the marriage is over. The looming separation initially recalls a shipwreck and is later met with a lament: "Woe is me. And my wife. And my children" (#64).

Curriculum Vitae was published in 2007, but its sporadic autobiographical narrative dissolves in the 1990s. The final mention of the family unit intact, identifies each one of its members by name, either real or fictionalized: "We (which is to say, Yolanda and I, and Sivan, Mikha'el and Yotam) sat on the porch and ate our dinner…" (#81). At that time, outside their house in Safed, cows were sleeping, and the author suggests that those cows may be dreaming of "large glass windows beyond which very odd things were happening" (#81). The book does not elaborate on the odd things that were happening inside that house, but after this scene, *Curriculum Vitae* ceases to speak about the family as a whole. In other words, while Yoel Hoffmann, the flesh and blood author, stayed married to his first wife until 1997 and his novel *Ephraim* situates that separation on the first day of the new millennium, *Curriculum Vitae* implies that the marriage actually ended earlier.

Ironically imitating a true CV, Hoffmann's book is peppered with dates, one of which is precise: "My mother died on January 27, 1941" (#1). The others simply note years: 1970, 1956 or 1983. This is true in all but one date, mentioned in segment 97: "Maybe ten years **before the end of the second millennium** my son Yotam came back from school with a Great Pyrenees dog" (#97)(emphasis mine). This formula "end of the millennium" is familiar to the readers of the 2003 *Ephraim* because it is the one Hoffmann uses there to announce the day he abandoned his wife: "on the last day of **the second millennium**, Ephraim takes out the suitcase and leaves"[18] (emphasis mine). In reality, Hoffmann did not leave his wife on the last day of the millennium, but rather in 1997. Curiously, the "end of the millennium" wording appears in *Curriculum Vitae*, only once: in segment 97. The use of the similar phrase then is a signal that, although *Curriculum Vitae* was published four years later, it tells the story that led to the events in *Ephraim*. But the intra-textual connection between these two works goes beyond a dramatic allusion to a date. In segment 97 of *Curriculum Vitae*, Hoffmann wants to send an SMS, a text message, of gratitude to the dog who lay in his yard before the end of the millennium. And behold, the parallel segment in *Ephraim* also involves a technologically delivered message, this one, more desperate.

> Oh the beloved of my heart. I'm using the printing
> machines of Keter publishing in order to tell you. […]. A kind of Morse
> code […]

Save… our… souls… Save… our…
souls…[19]

Immediately following Ephraim's Morse code, or text message, comes the actual scene of the hero's abrupt abandonment of his wife.

Yet despite the heartbreak of the separation, *Ephraim* ultimately turns toward the future, to a new millennium and a new love. The later *Curriculum Vitae*, on the other hand, looks back, using its declared genre to conjure up an entire life from memory: "What do we remember? The lake at Biwa and the houses across it. The cherry blossoms, and Auschwitz, Treblinka, Maidenak…" (#73). In his private code, Hoffmann enumerates here three significant memories. First, moments of grace with his first wife in October 1980 near Lake Biwa, which he eternalized in a Japanese-style poem in an iconic Japanese location: "(She sprinkles / perfume on the lobe of her ear / my wife of autumn)" (#73). The second memory, the cherry blossoms, represents Hoffmann's spiritual immersion in Japanese culture, the importance of which cannot be expressed in words.[20] The third is the collective Jewish memory of the Holocaust. Hoffmann was not in Europe during World War II, yet the Holocaust haunts him. In fact, elsewhere in *Curriculum Vitae*, he says, "the people in the crematorium […] the books we've written are dedicated to them. One explicitly. One allusively. And the others secretly" (#88). He adds that, "There isn't a single page from which smoke does not ascend" (#88).[21] In a feat of artistic magic only Hoffmann could perform, *Curriculum Vitae* merges the Japanese sensibility that inspired him so profoundly with the Holocaust. *Curriculum Vitae* presents quotations from the scholarly volume that Hoffmann authored in 1981 about the poems that Japanese write before they die.[22] These quotations, however, turn into a dirge for the Jews who perished in Europe. Seven Japanese poems, some copied verbatim from that book, are mixed with seven new poems that give voice to Jews going to their deaths. For example, the poem by the Japanese poet Minteisengan: "Fall, plum petals, / fall – and leave behind / the *memory* of scent" is followed by a Hoffmann original: "Oy Mireleh / where have we lost / little Moshe" or "What kind of tree / did we see on the way / to the crematorium" (#74). The meeting of the minimalism of Japanese aesthetic and the poems that Jews supposedly composed on their way to the death chambers shocks with its understatement. For those Jews, the brevity of the poem is not an artistic choice, but a representation of their impending execution. Furthermore, a chilling association could be made between the traditional practice of

cremation, evoked in some Japanese death poems, and the cremation of living Jews by the Germans. Finally, one of the texts that Hoffmann formats as a poem and interlaces with the Japanese ones in *Curriculum Vitae* is the ancient Jewish verse: "Hear O Israel / the Lord is our God, the Lord / is one" (#74). This is the biblical *shmaʿ* that a Jew says before his death. As the Japanese genre is Judaified, the memory of Auschwitz overpowers Japanese poetics.

Curriculum Vitae ends with a treatise on the nature of memory. How could it be that we, with our little skulls, contain the entire world? Our own world, as well as the world that we have seen throughout our lives, or in Hoffmann's words, "the great river of memories that we call life" (#97). In the final three segments of the book, he lists a catalogue of memories that capture large portions of his life, all preserved inside his skull: mountains and continents, a Taiwanese market, corpses of pigs, paintings of hell in a Taoist temple, sellers of coral and the body of Chang Kai-Shek. There is no hierarchy to those recollections. As is the case throughout the book, the consciousness of a dog, philosophical studies, prostitutes in Paris, and the airport in Osaka are equally important.

The randomness of memories is underscored by a multivalent metaphor that captures the essence of *Curriculum Vitae*: "a string on which pearls are strung" (#99). The string, or *ptil* in the Hebrew original, is cut and the "pearls scatter". "A cut string" or "*ptil nikpad*" is an idiomatic way to say in Hebrew that a life has been cut off (*ptil hayim nikpad*). As he writes his *Curriculum Vitae*, does Hoffmann foresee his own death? Is this entire work a poem before death? Of the images preserved in his skull, randomly scattered like pearls from a snapped string, the narrator collects one hundred, the same number as the segments of the book. Hoffmann wonders, "how many could I have gathered?", and answers, "At most a hundred" (#99).[23] Each one of the segments of *Curriculum Vitae* is, therefore, one pearl that was picked up by the author, a memory-pearl that was privileged to be written. Indeed, the last segment, number 100, alludes to death through its imagery: night, white sheets, and burial. White sheets symbolize both sleep and the shrouds used in the Jewish tradition. They are followed by a body embraced by the roots of trees beneath the ground. Prayers are then recited by crows, the black birds associated with death in many cultures.

To conclude, while chronological scrambling dominates Hoffmann's subversive *Curriculum Vitae*, the arrangement of segments within it follows an alternate order, a poetic or musical order. One of the forces that motivates Hoffmann's work is the pursuit of the proper or correct melody. This is evident not only in the multiple musical compositions he

evokes throughout his oeuvre, but more importantly, in his insistent search for the mother's voice and the sounds of the languages he heard as a child. Musical principles also direct him as he orchestrates his individual works. When I interviewed Hoffmann in May 1993, he said, "The story is not important. The main thing is the music. The ending [of a book] needs to be like the chord that ends the symphony".[24] Indeed, the final chord is where the key in which a piece of music has been written is the clearest. Throughout the work, the composer may change keys, but he must conclude with the key he chose as his base because the final chord frames the entire piece. While the world of sounds inside a work is rich and varied, the ending must always return home.

The last lines of *Curriculum Vitae* are: "Everything grows increasingly distant. Only the women linger, like those lights one sees along the horizon, during the winter night at the Pole" (#100). The final chord struck by this piece, then, is the inner light he received from the women in his life: his first wife, the woman who brought his three children into the world; the kind stepmother who raised him; and the woman who gave him life, his mother.

Notes

1 This appears in Hoffmann's 1989 *Bernhard* and his 1991 *Christ of Fish*. Yoel Hoffmann, *Bernhard*, (Jerusalem: Keter Books, 1989), p. iv. Translation mine.

2 This more extensive disclaimer appears in Hoffmann's 2001 book *The Shunra and the Schmetterling*.

3 Yoel Hoffmann, *Curriculum Vitae*, (Jerusalem: Keter Books, 2005), p. ii. Translation mine.

4 As Rachel Albeck-Gidron notes, "The question of the genre of Hoffmann's texts… may open the discussion of the uniqueness of his works… it is a borderline case between poetry and prose, dirge and comedy, etc." Rachel Albeck-Gidron, *Exploring the Third Option: A Critical Study of Yoel Hoffmann's Works* (Or Yehuda and Beer-Sheva: Kinneret, Zmora-Bitan, Dvir and Heksherim Institute, 2016), pp. 44-45. Translation mine. Yigal Schwartz argues that Hoffmann's entire oeuvre may be read as chapters of a fragmented post-Holocaust epos. Yigal Schwartz, "The Exploits of the Heart: A Proposal for Reading Yoel Hoffmann" *Odot: Journal for Essays and Literary Criticism,* Vol. 1, December 28 (2016). https://www.reviewbooks.co.il/1-1 I agree with both critics that at least a partial key to the riddle of Hoffmann's corpus lies in the solution to this question of genre.

5 For a full discussion of scrambling, see: Michael Riffaterre, *Semiotics of Poetry*, (Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1978), pp. 138-150.

6 Yoel Hoffmann, *Curriculum Vitae*, (translated from the Hebrew by Peter Cole; New York: New Directions, 2009), Segment 15. There are no page numbers in *Curriculum Vitae*, so I refer only to the segment number. Henceforth, when quoted, the segment number will be indicated in the body of the article, not in an endnote. I use Cole's translation unless otherwise noted.

7 S.Y. Agnon, "In the Prime of Her Life," *Al kapot haman'ul* (At the doorknob), (Jerusalem and Tel Aviv: Schocken, 1971), pp. 5-54, p. 5. Translated from the Hebrew by Gabriel Levin.

8 Amos Oz, *A Tale of Love and Darkness*, (translated from the Hebrew by Nicholas de Lange; New York: Harcourt, 2004), p. 520.

9 Nili Gold, "To Walk on the 'Inner Streets': Yoel Hoffmann's *Ephraim," On Liminality*, special issue of *Criticism & Interpretation: Journal for Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Culture*, Vol. 43, spring (2009), pp. 229-248; pp. 243-245 [in Hebrew].

10 Hoffmann, *Curriculum Vitae*, Segments 1, 7, and 12 among others.

11 On the relationship between Hoffmann's Israeli environment and his immigrant experiential stance, see: Albeck-Gidron, *Exploring the Third Option*, pp. 53-55

12 *Curriculum Vitae*, Segment 5

13 Yoel Hoffmann, "Katschen," *The Book of Joseph*, (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing, 1987), pp. 7-49, p. 26. Yoel Hoffmann, "Katschen," *Katschen and the Book of Joseph*, (translated from the Hebrew by David Kirss and Eddie Levenston; New York: New Directions, 1998), pp. 97-161, p. 124

14 Nili Gold, "Betrayal of the Mother Tongue in the Creation of National Identity," *Ideology and Jewish Identity in Israeli and American Literature*, (ed. by Emily Miller Budick; Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001) pp. 235-258, p. 240.

15 Yoel Hoffmann, *Bernhard*, (translated from the Hebrew by Alan Treister with Eddie Levenston; New York: New Directions, 1998), Segment 34.

16 Nili Gold, "Bernhard's Journey: The Challenges of Yoel Hoffmann's Writing," *Jewish Studies Quarterly*, No. 1, (1994), pp. 271-287, pp. 274-275

17 In her articles, Chana Herzig examines Hoffmann's ties to Buddhist thought and discusses Buddhism's non-binary nature in relation to life and death. Chana Herzig, "From the Heights of Galaxies and Through the Magnifying Glass," *Iton*, (1989), pp. 77-139; "A Yeke in Buddhist Garb," *Yedi'ot Aharonot*, July 7, (1989).

18 Yoel Hoffmann, *Ephraim*, (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing, 2003), Segment 83. Translation mine.

19 Ibid., Segment 82

20 Hoffmann devoted his entire scholarly career to the study of ancient Japanese philosophy and religion. He also translated Japanese poetry extensively into Hebrew and English. For example, see the following widely praised translations: Yoel Hoffmann, *Le'an Ne'elmu Hakolot* (Where did the sounds go: Zen Stories and Haiku Poems), (Israel: Massada Ltd., 1980); *Japanese Death Poems: Written by Zen Monks and Haiku Poets on the Verge of Death*, (Rutland Vermont and Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle Company, 1986). For a discussion of Hoffmann's translations of Japanese writings, see: Doron Cohen, "Yoel Hoffmann as a Haiku Translator" in this issue of *Conference on Jewish Studies*, pp. 1-14, pp. 4-10.

21 Schwartz echoes the overwhelming power that the Holocaust has over Hoffmann's oeuvre as a whole. Schwartz, "The Exploits of the Heart."

22 Hoffmann, *Japanese Death Poems*. For a discussion of this work by Hoffmann, see article by Janine

Beichman in this issue of *Conference on Jewish Studies*.

23 My translation of Segment 99.

24 Author's interview with Hoffmann, Safed, Israel, May 1, 1993